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TITLE:

The Arab Spring in Egypt and its influence on the Army - What does the history tell us  
about the nature of the Egyptian Army?


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## *Preface*

After the Egyptian revolution in 2011, many changes occurred in Egypt. The most significant is the Muslim brotherhood winning the presidency elections. Since then many arguments aroused about the future of Egypt especially the Army. My topic is reflecting my prediction about the Army under the new form of presidency based upon history. Throughout history, religion always has a place in the Egyptian hearts. Although many intruders tried to change this fact, they failed. The quality and quantity of religion in Egyptian hearts are constants.

Therefore, I wrote about three main points; the history of religion in Egypt relating to the army, its condition between the two revolutions, and finally my expectations for the future. Through my writing, I referred to the Muslim brotherhood history.

Finally, since I came here many people are asking me about Islam in Egypt after the revolution especially because there are many fake or blur news about Egypt, so I decided to choose this topic to cast light on some facts concerning Islam in Egypt to help those who are wondering about the future of Egypt and its Army.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Paulleta Otis for her guidance and assistance with this project.

## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** The Arab Spring in Egypt and its influence on the Army - What does the history tell us about the nature of the Egyptian Army?

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**Thesis:** In an attempt to figure out how the Egyptian Army will react to the current changes in Egypt by studying its history focusing on the period between the two revolutions 1952 and 2011, and then assessing the post revolution, the conclusion must be that the Army is an inseparable part of the society, which always sticks to its religious nature without forgetting its national responsibilities.

**Discussion:** In the Pharaohs' time, when the Egyptians were free from the control of either an invasion power or a tyrant government, they were obsessed by worshiping and seeking God's satisfaction. Foreign invasions tried to change this character but they failed. In the meantime, they kept the Egyptians from serving in the army in the fear of the army rising against them. Leaders like Salah Eldin (1171) and Mohamed Ali (1805) supported this religious character and depended on Egyptians to build the Egyptian Army. In the period between the two revolutions 1952 and 2011 this religious character was used by the Egyptian presidents as a tool to fulfill their objectives. Finally, after the 2011 revolution, the society once again favored the religion fearing secularization attempts and the Army proved that it will always support the people and their security.

**Conclusion:** The Egyptian religious character dominated the Egyptian history that also showed that the Egyptian Army is always biased towards the society whatever the kind of the government is.

Egyptians have always been described as this “Being religious and acknowledging God's grace is a common phenomenon in Egyptian society. Religious rituals are habitually practiced at home. In ancient Egypt, there were special Mihrabs (prayer niches) for the pictures of idols. In the Coptic era as well, pictures of Christ and the Virgin Mary were found in every house. During the Islamic Age, verses of the Holy Qur'an, written in beautiful Arabic calligraphy, were popular in the homes”<sup>1</sup>. That is the definition of the Egyptian society. In an attempt to figure out how the Egyptian army will react to the current changes in Egypt by studying its history focusing on the period between the two revolutions 1952 and 2011, and then assessing the post revolution, the conclusion must be that the army is an inseparable part of the society, which always sticks to its religious nature without forgetting its national responsibilities. One of Prophet Mohammed’s sayings, which states that “Egyptians are eternally connected as one mass until domes day” supports this fact.

## **HISTORY**

The Pharaohs’ Age is the best time to analyze in order to know the real personality of the Egyptians since it was the only time when there were no outside influences. Only at that time could Egyptians express their own character freely without the modern media’s fake deliveries. This real character appears again whenever the opposing force is removed. This idea is true for both the religious character of the Egyptians and the army tendency to back up the people rather than supporting the ruling regime. This was evident in the three Egyptian revolutions: Orabi’s in 1881, the Army’s in 1952, and the People’s in 2011<sup>2</sup>. However, the periods of foreign invasion were also important to illustrate Egyptian reaction to any foreign influence. These two cases, Egyptians before and during invasions, will help predicting the future reaction of the army to the current changes that are occurring in Egypt.

First of all, the story of the religion within the army started by the pharaohs but faded out during the several invasions by the Ptolemaic (323B.C), the Romans (47B.C), the French (1798), and the British (1882). However, religious influence was apparent when it had the chance under Salah Eldin's (1171) and Mohamed Ali's (1805) rule.

From the early history, the Egyptians were known for their tendency to be religious. Historians discovered that pharaohs were the first believers in the era of Akhenaton who believed in one God.<sup>3</sup> Herodotus said that the Egyptians were the first people to have respect for sanctuaries.<sup>4</sup> He also mentioned that Egyptians including the army, used to cut their hair to look like their Gods as they thought.<sup>5</sup> They considered the pharaoh as a God and for him they used to build the pyramids to keep his body safe after death.

They worked hard in building the pyramids to serve God.<sup>6</sup> As death was a main concern for old Egyptians, most of the stories in the temples' walls talked about it. They seemed to care more about their after life than their current life; that is why they professionalized embalming bodies after death. Their tombs and temples are strong evidence for their religious beliefs.

The impact of these religious feelings and thoughts was clear in the Egyptian army as it was attracting men to recruit in the army to defend the country under the name of God. The ancient Egyptian army consisted of divisions; each division carried a name of God.<sup>7</sup> According to the Area Handbook for Egypt in 1964, it says that "The historic Egyptian armies moved into Asia carrying a sense of their identity and role as people of the Gods."<sup>8</sup> The Egyptians' special feelings towards religion are not strange since that is the land where most of the prophets lived in or at least passed by such as Ibrahim, Yusuf, Jacob, and Mosses.

The foreign invasions were started by Alexander the Great and the Ptolemaic Kingdom that followed the death of Alexander the Great in 332 BC. The Ptolemaic respected the Egyptians' obsession with religion. Therefore, they supported them in following their own way of worship. They respected the Egyptian temples and Gods.<sup>9</sup> For an army, the Ptolemaic depended mainly on the Macedonians and Greeks and not on the indigenous Egyptians so it is irrelevant to study the army during that time.

In the year 47BC, the Romans conquered Egypt for almost 700 years. During the Roman invasion, the Egyptians formed only 20% of the army. Each year a number of 350 to 360 Romans were discharged from the army. Many of these veterans chose to live in Egypt after retirement and they were absorbed in the population.<sup>10</sup> They formed a third group of Christians in Egypt. Therefore, during the French invasion (1798) the Egyptian historian Elgabarty talked about Coptic Christians, Greek Christians, and Roman Christians who lived in Egypt during that time forming about 5% of the population<sup>11</sup>. The Roman army treated Egyptians with brutality and cruelty as it got its power from the emperor so it was over the law<sup>12</sup>. The Romans treated Egyptians badly by imposing high taxes and exploiting the resources. When Egyptians turned to Christianity, they faced more oppression from the Romans. They had to live in remote areas in the desert away from the Romans' oppression.<sup>13</sup> They preferred to live in the desert and to bear torture than to be deprived of their religion.

That was the case in Egypt until the Islamic conquest arrived and gave every Egyptian the freedom to choose his religion in 639. By time most of the Egyptians converted to Islam.<sup>14</sup> After Islam, Egyptians once again had the opportunity to join the army and to fight in the Islamic conquest. In that time the soldiers once again had the opportunity to practice their religious rituals freely as it was encouraged by the Islamic leaders.

However, that was not the case all the time since the Islamic dynasty passed by many corrupted regimes that affected the people. For instance, in 969 the Fatimid, which was a Shi'i sect, tried to convert the population away from the Egyptian's Sunni religion. They built El Azhar Mosque to be the minaret of Shi'i religion. They started to disseminate their ideas through schools and written books. The Egyptians refused to accept their ideas. That is why they welcomed Salah Eldin as the sultan of Egypt in 1171. He was known for his religious character. He was just, generous, and possessed many characters that attracted all Egyptians-- although he was Kurdish and not Egyptian<sup>15</sup>. He was a genius political, military, and Islamic leader. He turned El Azhar to be a minaret of Sunni Islam. He built many schools and law colleges that taught the basics of Sunni Islam<sup>16</sup>.

In the meantime, Salah Eldin worked to clear the Egyptian army of infidels (the Armenians) and pagans (the blacks). This was not because of racial reasons, as mentioned by the writer Yaacov Lev in his book *Saladin in Egypt* since there were black Egyptians who served in the Army.<sup>17</sup> It was based upon the idea that only Egyptians would be able to defend their country and the religion. In 1171 Salah Eldin built a new army depending on the Egyptians.

Salah Eldin's approach for rebuilding the army was a religious one as he always cared for the religious state of the army's personnel. For example, one day when he was moving around the forces' camps he heard some soldiers conversing about some religious issues in their spare time, His comment was "from here comes victory". On the other hand, when he heard others talking about life and daily matters his comment was "from here comes defeat."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Salah Eldin was not only a state reformer but also was a religious one since he worked in returning Egyptians back to their religious nature.

In the Ottoman Empire (1517-1798), Egyptians did not serve in the army since it was only for those who were of Turkish origins. The Ottoman rulers did not recruit soldiers from the local population for the fear of forming a coup against them so they depended on imported Mamluks (slave soldiers) who had no relatives in this country.<sup>19</sup> For the same reason they assigned the Christians to run the finance and to have the most wealth in Egypt<sup>20</sup>. During that time, the army was described as “.. Highly disciplined, loyal, and never infringes upon the authority of the Pasha or other rulers.”<sup>21</sup>

By the end of the sixteenth century, Egyptians started to infiltrate into the army. Due to deteriorated economic, social, and political conditions of the Ottoman Empire, these soldiers rebelled against the Ottoman rulers<sup>22</sup>. After defeating this rebellion, the Turks worked on keeping Egyptians out of the army and to depend mainly on Mamluks.

In 1798, Napoleon was one of the geniuses who recognized that Egyptians were fervently religious and that Islam was the only obstacle to his rule of Egypt. He decided to use the Ulama (Muslim clerics) to accomplish his objectives. He let them lead the government to make the French authority acceptable to the population. He tried to convince the people by the idea that the French were, in fact, Muslims as they also believed in one God. However, he forgot, or did not understand, that Islam was a complete way of life not simply a doctrine.

There was a discrepancy between what he wrote in his messages to the Egyptian about his religious beliefs and what they really saw in the French way of life.<sup>23</sup> On one hand, he showed his respect to Islam and the Egyptians' traditions. For example, he encouraged the sheiks to celebrate the Prophet Mohamed's birthday and not to cancel it because of the French invasion.

He made it a three-day celebration instead of the regular one day. He ordered the French army to salute Prophet Mohammed's birthday with the artillery together with marching bands.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, Bonaparte revealed his ugly face later on by punishing the Egyptian peasants and burning whole villages.<sup>25</sup> Although the Egyptians were living a poor miserable life, dying of hunger, and pressurized by the heavy French taxes, Bonaparte neglected this and cared about building theatres to allow women to dance and sing to the public--something against the Egyptians' religion and traditions<sup>26</sup>. He gave the Christian Copts the job of collecting taxes since they controlled the finance of Egypt under the Ottoman rule.<sup>27</sup>

It is important to mention that when the French army was approaching Cairo, Omar Makram, the leader of the caste of notables<sup>28</sup> held a banner( called the Prophet Banner), led thousands of Egyptians, gathered carrying sticks, and chanted God is Great ( Allah Akbar). They were prepared to defend their own city at the time when the rich Ottomans and Mamluks fled.<sup>29</sup>

In 1805, the Egyptians returned to be the corner stone of the army. This occurred when Mohamed Ali, an Albanian tobacco trader, ruled Egypt. He was the constructor of the new Egypt as he started renovations in military, education, agriculture, and manufacture.<sup>30</sup> After he returned from his war against the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia in 1815, he started building the new Egyptian army depending on Egyptians and trained by a French officer who converted to Islam, Soliman Basha.<sup>31</sup> Mohamed Ali treated both Muslims and Christians in a good way. His war against the Wahaby movement in Saudi Arabia was a response to the Ottoman Empire since the Ottomans were afraid of the increasing power of the Wahhabis in Hejaz, which is the spiritual capital of the Islamic world.

Mohamed Ali made special flags for the different army divisions. These flags were white in color and had Holy Quran verses written on them. The Egyptian flag always had a sign for Islam, which was the crescent in the Ottoman Empire's flag, the green color for the Egyptian kingdom's flag in 1923 and the crescent that carries the three stars symbolizing Islamic Egypt that had inside it the three religions Islam, Christian, and Jewish as shown in appendix A.

In 1881, before the British invasion, one leader stood against the corrupted government and its British alliance. He was Orabi Basha, colonel of the fourth regiment of the Egyptian army. The Egyptian colonel won the hearts of the Egyptian army because he was a very religious person.<sup>32</sup>

The British invasion had significant implications on the Egyptian society. Although the declared aim of the invasion was to improve the semi-civilized Egyptian, their main aim was to destroy the conservative religious Egyptian culture. In that time, "The Islamic belief system was disrupted and was no longer congruent with experienced social life."<sup>33</sup> The British divided the society into two groups: the aristocrats (represented 6% of the community) who possessed 65% of the land and the rest of the population who worked for the aristocrats and lived a poor miserable life.<sup>34</sup> The British were measuring their progress on transforming the country on the aristocratic level only.

Even the reformist Islam and liberal nationalism that emerged during that period compromised with the ideas of the British power.<sup>35</sup> In other words, the British did not approve all kinds of religious and national movements. The result of the British invasion was a corrupted

government and crown, poverty, and destroyed economy (the annual per capita income declined from 109.50\$ in 1907 to 63.50\$ in 1950)<sup>36</sup>. There was an uncertain future for a once great civilized country.

This corrupted environment controlled by the British led to the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood, a true mass movement led by the charismatic Hassan El Banna (1928). He described Egypt during that time in a few words:

Young men were lost, and the educated were in a state of doubt and confusion... I saw that the social life of the beloved Egyptian nation was oscillating between her dear and precious Islamism which she had inherited, defended, lived with and become accustomed to, and made powerful during thirteen centuries, and this severe Western invasion which is HisedflunchequippedheishlallewdestmotiveandtheQanera(reidigifluregoodes)monee he wealth, prestige, ostentation, material enjoyment, power, and means of propaganda.<sup>37</sup> confined the religious character, Egyptianalspirit, was theonly skollentatwaseceofBrailly arrested and tried by the British and as a political exile for twenty years in Sri Lanka, freeing the country of the British invasion, and clearing the government of the pro-British invasion aristocrats. This group supported by El Azhar graduates worked against the British secularization aims as they started educating children and acquainting Egyptians with the evil British aims in Egypt.<sup>38</sup>

During this time, Egypt became divided into two groups: The rich sector that supported the British army for the sake of governmental positions and people who were trying to conserve their Islamic and Egyptian rituals and they formed the poor majority who worked for the tyrant rich. The later group saw in the Muslim brotherhood the only hope to get rid of the violence of the British.

To be in the Egyptian army was a privilege for Egyptian aristocrats. The British also introduced foreign elements such as Albanians, Anatolians, and Circassians to rebuild the

Egyptian army since they dissolved it after Orabi's revolution. Fearing an Orabi- like uprising, Egyptians were not prevented from promotions within the army.<sup>39</sup> In addition, some poor people could get the support of the aristocrats who they worked for them to allow their sons to enter the army<sup>40</sup>. It is not true that non-Egyptians dominated the army because the majority of the commanders in 1948 war were Egyptians and they started their military career in the twenties.<sup>41</sup>

The Muslim Brothers movement appealed to many officers in the army especially those who had political ambitions who will later name themselves the Free Officers. In 1942, Abd El Monem Abdel Rauf, Abd el Nasser, Khalid Muhi Al Din, Kamal Eldin Husain, Saad Tawfiq, Salah Khalifa, and Husayn Hammuda joined the Muslim Brothers. Some of them were true Islamists and others were nationalists impressed by the brothers' intentions. Their number quickly increased but problems between the officers and Muslim brothers occurred because of the difference in strategy. This led them to separate from the Muslim brothers to form separate collations.<sup>42</sup>

In the 1948 war against the Israeli invasion of Palestine, the Egyptian army fought together with civilian recruits (most of them belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood as shown in appendix B). At the beginning of the war, they nearly defeated the Israeli army. When they approached Tel Aviv, the United Nation imposed a ceasefire. The corruption within Egypt and the reluctant British commander of the Arab forces together with the international aid to the Israeli army led to the defeat of the Arab army. A bond between the Muslim Brotherhood and the army represented by Abd el Nasser, the future president of Egypt was established during this war. Nasser negotiated with the Brothers to get their support in the revolution.<sup>43</sup> This was the spark for the 1952 revolution against the corrupted aristocrats and their British supporters.

Moreover, it is important to mention the incident of the Cairo Fire on 26 January 1952 and the Army's response to it. Egyptians were conducting guerrilla warfare against the British occupying forces in the Suez Canal. The British reacted violently against the Egyptian police in Ismailia (a city near the Suez Canal). They killed fifty police officers and wounded eighty as a deterrent for the Egyptians to stop fighting their troops and to stop boycotting their products. This brutal incident caused the Egyptians to riot the streets and causing fires in parts of Cairo. At that time Cairo was largely populated by Europeans and was full of clubs, cinemas, and all sorts of entertainment for the highly rich people. The situation was so severe that it needed the intervention of the Army. However, it deployed slowly and refused to shoot a round against any rioter.<sup>44</sup>

Secondly, the period between the 1952 revolution and 2011 revolution had four main events: (1) Abdel Nasser's socialism, (2) 1967 defeat, (3) 1973 victory, and (4) Mubarak's era. After the army revolution in 1952, the formation of the Egyptian army changed completely. It was based upon Egyptians from all of the society's levels: farmers, workers, and anyone who had the ability to apply for army colleges. That made the Army more closely reflects the society.

Both Nasser and Sadat used Islam as a tool for their policies but in different ways. For Nasser he was looking for the unity of the Arab nation. Therefore, Islam was one of the best tools as it was a common factor between the Arab countries. He cared for El Azhar to be an institution for all Muslims and not only the Egyptians. He made a great effort to support Islam in Africa by sending teachers and building Islamic centers there.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, he worked on diminishing the role of Muslim brothers in society especially after their achievements in fighting against the British invasion. In 1954, Abd El Nasser faked an

assassination plot against him made by the Muslim Brotherhood in order to send them all to prison. He refused to give them any governmental positions as he was just using religion as a tool to achieve his aims; he was not for a religiously defined country.

After the signing of the anti-Soviet Baghdad Pact in February 1955, the U.S.S.R started to look for allies and Egypt was one of the best potential allies because of its geopolitical location. Despite the fact that Nasser did not like to involve Egypt in the Cold War, he tried to buy arms from the U.S.A and Europe but they refused. Building a strong and capable army was one of the main requests of the Egyptian revolution especially because of the increasing power of Zionism in Palestine after the 1948 war. On February 1955, after the Israeli invasion of the Gaza strip, Nasser turned to Russia for weapons. The idea of communism started to invade Egyptian society.<sup>46</sup>

At this time, the Egyptian army then was more open to communist beliefs than Islamic ones. After the 1967 defeat, the Russian military advisors joined military units. Large numbers of Egyptian officers went to Russia to take Military courses. Many officers learned the Russian language and talked about communist ideas. However, Russians were not willing to support a liberation war against the Israeli army whether in Sinai or Syria.<sup>47</sup>

Egyptians, including the army were very frustrated after the defeat in 1967 war. That pushed Sadat the president after Nasser, to make good use of religion. Azhari Sheik, (Islamic religious chaplains) were sent to the military units to support the soldiers and to prepare them spiritually for the 1973 war. Mosques and churches worked together to build the people's morale. Sadat's speeches were full of religious terms. Moreover, he released Muslim brothers from prisons. He used to pray the Friday's prayers in front of the photographers and he described himself once as

“a Muslim leader of a Muslim country.”<sup>48</sup> He encouraged every Islamic movement to work against communism and pro Nasser’s ideas.<sup>49</sup> He chose Ramadan month (the fasting month for Muslims) to declare the 1973 war to free Sinai. The result of this was that the Egyptian army defeated the Israeli army; they destroyed the Barlivi strongly defended line-- once alleged by the Israelis that it was unbreakable. Soldiers chanted, “God is great” while crossing the Suez Canal to defeat the enemy in Sinai. Sheikh Sharawi, one of the well-known Azhar religious scholars and loved by almost all Egyptians, said after the war “thanks to God that we didn’t win the war under communism and we won it under Islam.”<sup>50</sup>

This state of pro-religion did not last for long as President Sadat went to sign a peace treaty with Israel. He arrested anyone who was against his decisions. He sent religious and political leaders, including Muslim Brotherhood members back to jail. He put all mosques under the administration of the ministry of endowments and suspended all Islamic associations in the universities. His intention was to appear modern in front of the western societies<sup>51</sup>.

The Military had a prestigious place in the society especially after the victory of 1973 war. His open policy towards the west had some consequences for the army. There were more exercises with U.S.A and European countries. The number of officers studying abroad increased. However, in this environment, religious influence in the army declined. Eventually, it was Sadat’s oppression of Islamic and other Egyptian national symbols that led to his assassination in 1981 during a military parade commemorating the 1973 victory<sup>52</sup>.

Under both Nasser and Sadat (1952-1981), the army was kept away from religious aspects. They removed any sign of religion from the Egyptian flag (the green color and the crescent as shown in appendix **B**). However, officers and soldiers were eager to pray regularly and observe

other religious rituals. Ramadan, the month of fasting, is a social and religious event inside and outside the military. Muslims observe it as the month they defeated the enemy in Sinai. It is the month when soldiers have the opportunity to follow their religious rituals together with their military responsibilities encouraged by the spirits of the 10<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan victory as a symbol of all other Islamic military victories.

During Mubarak's era (1981-2011), oppression continued against religious people. Even the Army was influenced. Military intelligence and military security forces were concerned about the military personnel who attended the mosques. Military personnel who were overtly religious were put under control and kept from privileges such as being nominated for commanding positions and travelling abroad in military exercises (a privilege that is desired by most of the military people). Officers whose wives wore the veil were not allowed to be military attachés. Women who wear the full veil, one that covers the face, could not enter the military clubs.

In addition, the declared position for the army was that it was of complete loyalty and support for the president and his family. For instance, on 6 June, 1999, despite the constitutional law that says that military people are not allowed to have political point of view, the minister of defense Field Marshal Husain Tantawy and the Minister of interiors General Habib Eladly presented a written nomination from the military and the police that they are supporting Mubarak as a president for the next presidential elections.<sup>53</sup> They said this without knowing, by vote, whether soldiers actually agreed to that position or not.

Any action has an opposite reaction, which is equal in magnitude but in the opposite direction. Military personnel started to be more close to religion. Many became eager to pray in the mosque. They did not care about losing the military privileges. They never turned hostile

inside the military units but the religious spirit made them eager to do their best in their work. What finally increased the tension between military people and the Mubarak regime was the increased corruption. For example, meritocracy disappeared, officers with bad reputations could still serve as long as they had relatives in important positions. Protecting the presidential family drained funds from the Army.

In fact, military religious people were cautious in their approach to religion. In other words, they could differentiate between what is really religious and any other corrupted ideas. For example, years ago, recorded tapes for unknown Sheikhs spread in the army community with some strange ideas encouraging soldiers to leave the army as it serves a secular government. However, it failed since only a very small percent followed these deviant ideas. The main reason for these was the soldiers' beliefs and confidence in their duty in the Army. The idea that who serves the army will be repaid by God in the afterlife was the main antibody inside the soldiers' minds and hearts against these thoughts.

Mubarak's policy towards the Palestinians was very disappointing to all Egyptians. Upcoming news about the miserable life the Palestinians live in Gaza strip because of the Israeli blockade affected many Egyptians. In 2009, when Israel brutally attacked Gaza strip, Israel announced that they already informed the Egyptian officials of the planned offensive during Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's visit to Mubarak two days before the attack<sup>54</sup>. Anger spread everywhere, in particular within the military people because of Mubarak's plotting with Israel against the Palestinians.

Finally, the revolution took place and Mubarak was ousted on 11 February 2011. This was followed by the friction between the liberal and Islamic parties before the elections. The army

forgot about its needs, and stayed neutral. Many factors led to frustration within the Egyptians: the miserable life most Egyptians were living, the corruption in the government, Mubarak's monopolization of the resources, and the neglect of hard workers and distinguished scholars. All Egyptians had access to public media and could see others who were able to live a wealthy life – business persons, actors, and football players. Preparing Mubarak's son Gamal to take the presidency after him was up particularly galling.

Two main forces were critical for the success of the revolution: the Islamists and the army since both were oppressed by Mubarak and both were much closer to the Egyptian community than others in society. In this context, the term “Islamists” does not mean a group or political party. They are the Egyptians themselves who saw in religion the only moral escape from Mubarak's tyranny. The same was true for the Army: religion meant the reward for the hard work in the armed forces.

On the other hand, liberal groups directly after the ousting of Mubarak worked in advertising for their liberal ideas. They forgot that the Egyptians already tried liberalism and socialism and they never worked with them. Moreover, ideas like same sex marriage, women and gays serving in the army, and sexual freedom were counter to social, religious, and traditional values of the society. The liberals' acts pushed the Egyptians more towards the religious parties. Egyptians now are not gathered around a person as they did with Abd El Nasser in the 1950s or as with Orabi against the British invasion but they are fighting for religious identity and the only group that appeals for their needs is the Islamic parties because of their close relation to the society as presented in Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher report, *The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament*.<sup>55</sup>

This unbalanced situation occurred as a result of many different forces affecting the Egyptian community: secular media, Islamic media, the Church, the failed parties after the elections and outside intervention from the Arab kingdoms, Israel, and the USA. Each group has its own interest. For instance, the media that are owned by Mubarak's regime are afraid to lose the privileges they had before and they could face corruption trials. The Arab Kingdoms fight against any revolutionary act as they see revolutions as a threat to their own regimes. The U.S.A and Israel are against any Islamic state that might be established. Christians look for more political power and the fear of losing the religious freedom and the economic power they had.

After the Islamic parties won most of the chairs in the parliament, members of the police began demonstrations asking for the right to grow beards- a practice which is favorable, but not obligatory in Islam. So far, this group is prevented from resuming their job in the police as long as they keep their beards.

There was corruption in the police force during the Mubarak era. He gave them many privileges but after the revolution, these privileges were revoked. Conservative police members were suppressed as happened in the army. They found in the revolution the opportunity to gain their right to follow Islamic rituals as growing beards. The difference between the army and the police is that the Army knows how crucial their role is, especially after they carried the responsibility for domestic security because the police stopped working during the revolution.

It seems that the Army has unique properties that signify them:-

- 1- Most of the personnel are drawn from the middle level of the society.

2- They are more tolerant than the rest of the community because of the kind of training they have in the military.

3- Lack of any privileges that honors the military people for their duty towards the country.

All of these factors attributed to the way military members think and that let them care only about insuring the country's safety and security instead of asking for their own rights.

In the army, some changes occurred after removing the religious oppression. There was a demand for just treatment of religious men in the military. Rules such as preventing veiled wives from entering the clubs were removed. The idea of supporting the president whatever he does is no longer required.

In this dire situation, the Egyptian army tries to maintain a neutral position between the social and political forces. This intelligent reaction of the army is because of the consequences that might happen if it took sides: there is potential for a civil war as happened in Syria. On 11 February 2011, when the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took the authority of ruling the country after the ousting of Mubarak, the liberals were against them and demanded the transfer of power to civil authorities. However, when President Mohamed Morsi (Muslim brothers' party) won the presidential elections on 30 June 2012, the liberals demanded for a military coup to take the power from Islamic parties. The army knows its role, which is the whole country's safety not a group against another.

In another situation, during the period when the army was guarding the vital institutions in Cairo after the revolution, there was more than a trial to break a civil war in Egypt by involving the Army in clashes with civilians. Paid vandals attacked officers and soldiers in their posts.

However, these groups failed in their mission as the armed forces controlled their anger as much as they could. Military members understood that they had to be patient for the sake of their families and their country's safety.

Eventually this conflict will end and the Egyptian army will return to its primary nature if it is not constrained by other forces again as during the Mubarak period. This nature can be described as a main part of the community working for the sake of the country's safety, and driven by religious spirit as a source of power.

There are two facts no one can deny: (1) globalization now affects every aspect of life - the economy, politics, and internal relations. It is impossible for the Egyptian government to be separate from either the international community or the Egyptian people. A good example for this is the Salafist group in Egypt. This group used to live a very conservative way of life trying to follow all prophet's Mohamed way of life. After the revolution they started to work in politics and were forced to sit with unveiled T.V announcers to talk about their political party. They found that they had to adjust to the present way of life. (2) The second fact is that the Egyptian Islamic identity is impossible to erase. Since the British invasion in 1882, there were many useless trials to secularize the Egyptian society. Even if outwardly, the society appears secular, most Egyptians sustain their Islamic religious character. The past 130 years are true evidence for Egyptians that they cannot be completely secular. At the end of this conflict the true old Egypt that has the Islamic character with open policy towards the whole world, will return. In this Egypt the army will be religious not by the out features (clothes and beards) but by their strong bonds with their religion.

Throughout history, it is clear that Egyptians including their army has a certain character. In other words, they accept as basic its religious character and reject that which is contradictory. Many tried to change and affect this character by many methods-- sometimes by oppression and other times by trying to separate between its levels of society.

In the armed forces, religion has the stealth effect. It is always there without being declared. In other words, it is not important for soldiers to have a special scheduled times for prayers to pray because they do it whatever the situation. They do not need leave in the whole month of Ramadan to fast and pray since they are able to do it together with their job responsibility. Not only so, but also they believe it is a part of their religion to do their job while fasting. The army does not need an Islamic government to make it a religious army, as it knows its responsibilities towards both its religion and its country. Growing beards and wearing special clothes and any other Islamic outward features of the army, such as religious signs or flags under the rule of a religious government are not the requests for the army.

In conclusion, as the American author David Gaub McCullough said, "History is who we are and why we are the way we are,"<sup>56</sup>

As pharaohs, they proved themselves as religious community that cares more about their afterlife than anything else. There were many similarities in the way the invading power treated Egyptians. The Romans, the Turks, and the French kept the Egyptians away from serving in the army and treated them brutally in a way to separate between the societal levels. The aim was to

introduce secular life to this religious community, which was the same aim for the British invasion that tried a new strategy, which was allowing the Egyptians to serve in the army, but they tried to keep it in a higher level than the rest of the community.








As a republic, starting from the 1952 revolution presidents started to use the religion as a tool for the internal and external affairs together with escalating oppression of Islamic characters and decreasing the military privileges especially during Mubarak regime. After the 2011 revolution, the historic religious and national character appeared again as a motivating and centralizing force. The historic army adherence to the society showed up and controlled the forces that would have created a civil war.

Egyptians still remember that they were the greatest civilization when they were obsessed by the idea of religion and searching for God during the pharaohs' era. They will never forget the miserable life their grandparents lived under the foreign invasions' secularization trials. Under the Republic, they tried socialism and privatization and both failed with the Egyptian society.

It is engraved in history that the army and society are one entity that cannot be separated. The Egyptian history is a valuable source of information that the Egyptian army is biased towards the safety of the people whatever the kind of the government is. That is what history tells us about the Egyptian army's future. There were periods of freedom when the Egyptians and their army had the opportunity to express themselves without the intervention of any foreign forces and other periods that show how they reacted to these foreign forces.

## Appendix A

The development of the Egyptian flag.

	Flag of Ottoman Egypt (1793-1844)
	Flag of Muhammad Ali (1867-1881)
	Flag of the Kingdom of Egypt (1922–1953) the green color symbolized the religion of the country, Islam. The three stars represented the three religious communities of the country: Muslims, Christians, and Jews.
	Egyptian Revolution Flag (1953-1958) - the Free Officers kept the flag of the Kingdom, but also introduced the Arab Liberation flag of red, white, and black horizontal bands, with the emblem of the Revolution, the Eagle of Saladin, in the center. The flag of the Kingdom remained in official use until the formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958.
	Flag of the United Arab Republic (1958-1971 - though Syria withdrew from the union in 1961, Egypt retained the official name until 1971)
	Flag of the Federation of Arab Republics (1972–1984) the eagle was replaced by the golden hawk of Qureish(a powerful merchant tribe that controlled Makkah and its Kaaba upon the appearance of the religion of Islam.)
	three equal horizontal bands of red (top), white, and black; the national emblem (a gold Eagle of Saladin facing the hoist side with a shield superimposed on its chest above a scroll bearing the name of the country in Arabic) centered in the white band; the band colors derive from the Arab Liberation flag and represent oppression (black), overcome through bloody struggle (red), to be replaced by a bright future (white)

## Appendix B

A group of the Muslim brotherhood shot an Israeli armor in the 1948 war against the Israeli invasion to Palestine.



[http://sphotos-b.xx.fbcdn.net/hphotos-ash3/c0.0.398.398/p403x403/534168\\_558205730874093\\_35377165\\_n.jpg](http://sphotos-b.xx.fbcdn.net/hphotos-ash3/c0.0.398.398/p403x403/534168_558205730874093_35377165_n.jpg)

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- <sup>24</sup> Cole, 125.
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